

# Heidelberg Catechism 52–Jesus: His Return and Judgment–Part 1

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: In this first sermon from HC52 you'll hear about the coming of Jesus Christ. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> sermon you'll hear of his judgment. Let me begin by saying that much of what you hear about Christ's 2<sup>nd</sup> coming is wild speculation...much of which is not only bad but is sinful. You see, when men start looking for special signs (which God did not give) and tag them as evidence of the Lord's imminent即将发生的 coming, they adjust their behavior based on false signs. For example: If Christ is coming soon, why invest long term in business? Doctrines do have implications...good or bad doctrines...

Our headings are: Why will Messiah Return, When will Messiah Return, and What does Messiah's return imply for my life today?

Our goals are: That you will endure the troubles of this life and keep busy doing the Lord's work until Jesus Christ returns for you.

## **52 Q. HOW DOES CHRIST'S RETURN "TO JUDGE THE LIVING AND THE DEAD" COMFORT YOU?**

**A.** In all my distress and persecution I turn my eyes to the heavens and confidently await as judge the very One who has already stood trial in my place before God and so has removed the whole curse from me. All his enemies and mine he will condemn to everlasting punishment: but me and all his chosen ones he will take along with him into the joy and the glory of heaven.

## Why Will Messiah Return?

**1. Why will Christ return? Jesus will return because this world that is filled with frustrations and trials is not your permanent home and you are just passing through.** The Lord will come to take you, his elect, away from this world of distress and persecution. Then he will permanently remove the last vestiges of the curse that you inherited from Adam. Jesus himself said that he would return and remove you from this world and take you into a perfect world. He knew his people would be overwhelmed by troubles and so he courage them of his future coming.

John 14:1 "Let **not your heart be troubled**; you believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

**2. The Apostle Paul reiterated the reason for Jesus' return. He did this to remind his spiritual children that their troubles were only temporary.** When the Lord returned, they would be transferred to heaven.

Philippians 3:20 For **our citizenship is in heaven**, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself. And the fact that Christian's citizenship is in heaven was special, considering that many of the early Christians were slaves, second class Roman citizens, or had purchased Roman citizenship. Furthermore, Christians faced perpetual persecution from the Jews and the Romans.

## When Will Messiah Return?

**1. There are many, many false signs of Jesus' coming.** Many of the so-called signs of Jesus' coming were really signs of his destruction of wicked Jerusalem. Consider some verses of Matthew 24, a most famously misused passage of the Bible, which proves the misunderstanding of these signs. **I will highlight the signs that absolutely cannot refer to the end of world and Christ's 2<sup>nd</sup> coming.** If a sign cannot be applied to the end of the world and it is in the middle of a long list of signs (Matthew 24:4-34), you can confidently conclude that the other signs are referring to some other event rather than the end of the world... Now look at 7 things.

16 "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

When Jesus returns at the end of the world no one will be fleeing his city to go to the mountains.

Furthermore, most Christians are not living in Judea; we are all over the world. This verse has no relevance to us. And remember, at the end of the world you will be taken up (passive) to heaven. You won't have to run anywhere when Jesus Christ returns. This would only make sense if it were referring to a local event where the local people had to flee to avoid trouble.

17 "Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house.

When Jesus returns, it won't matter if you are on your housetop or not, or whether you are trapped in a basement apartment. You will be taken up (passive) to be with Jesus in the air. Your body will be changed. (passive)

18 "And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.

When Jesus returns at the end of the world if you are in the field you will be taken up (passive) and you won't care about earthly clothes because you won't have an earthly body. Your cashmere sweater will mean nothing then. Even the PETA people won't care about your wool coat then. If however, the Romans were beginning to lay siege on Jerusalem, you had reason to move fast.

19 "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!

When Jesus returns at the end of the world, there will be no more pain or pregnancy... And babies won't need their mother's milk in heaven. If, however, pregnant or nursing mothers had to make a trip up the mountains because of a local problem, that trip would have been difficult.

20 "And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.

When Jesus returns at the end of the world, it won't matter if it were summer or winter. You will be taken up into heaven where the temperature will be the equivalent to 21 degrees all year long—or whatever you think is the perfect temperature. You won't have to “flee” 逃走(active) when Jesus returns, rather, you will be pulled (passive) up into the air. And it will not matter if it is on the Sabbath when Christ returns. In fact, you will be entering into that Eternal Sabbath rest. If you had to leave Jerusalem and run to the mountains in winter or on the Sabbath when others wouldn't help you, then that would be another story.

29 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

The language of Matthew 24 is cataclysmic language which is very similar language that is used in the Old Testament to describe God's judgment on small countries or small cities – like Tyre.

(Isaiah) This is hyperbolic 夸张的 language. Eg: If stars fall from heaven, what will happen to the earth? Now if stars pictured cities of grandeur 壮观 and they fell, that would make sense, won't it? And in fact, Jesus Christ did explain when the signs of Matthew 24 would be fulfilled.

32 "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. 33 "So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors! 34 "Assuredly, I say to you, **this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.**

2. So now, specifically, **what true signs will accompany Christ's return at the end of the age?** Jesus addressed this 2<sup>nd</sup> question asked by his disciples. (Mt 24:3) (The first question was: When will the temple be destroyed and one stone not left on another?)

Matthew 24:36 "But of **that day** and hour **no one knows**, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. 37 "But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

38 "For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39 "and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 40 "**Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left.** 41 "Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. 42 "Watch therefore, for **you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.** 43 "But know this, that **if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come,** he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into.

Note the vagueness of Jesus' answer: his coming will be unexpected, like when the people of Noah's days were going about their normal life and then the rains came suddenly... like when two will be in the field and one suddenly taken. (Note, there is no talk about going back from the field to get clothes as he did earlier in Mt. 24... nor is there any worry about winter, Sabbath, or nursing

mothers... Jesus Christ will come like a thief – unexpectedly. Of course Jesus wasn't saying that the people would be bad as in the days of Noah for they were involved in regular activities – eating, drinking, and marrying. And of course Jesus wasn't saying he was a thief. He was simply saying that he would come unexpectedly like the rain in Noah's days or like the thief.

3. Two parables 寓言, in particular, give clear indications of the suddenness of the Lord's coming.
- This is the parable of the 5 wise and 5 foolish virgins. (Matthew 25) The point: No one knows when he is coming.
  - The parable of the talents. (Matthew 25). The point: No one knows when Christ will return.

### **What does Messiah's return imply for my life today?**

#### **1. You are to patiently wait for his return...Do not act sinfully now...Do not quarrel with him.**

Titus 2:11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

#### **2. Be prepared for his return...not like the foolish virgins who went to sleep...or like the servants who did not invest their money that their master left for them.**

Matthew 24:13 "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.

##### **a. Be prepared by working hard for your reward in heaven.**

Matthew 24:21 "His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

Matthew 24:44 "Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. 45 "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? 46 "Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing.

This means you must win men for Christ. And encourage those who are believers to worship God.

##### **b. Be prepared to endure persecutions 困扰: When you face any distress and persecutions...and you will...know that they will not last forever, for your Redeemer will return to take you away.**

Those who desire to live righteously will face persecution.

### **Conclusion:**

Jesus will return at a time of his choosing to gather his elect out of the four winds of the earth and from all their troubles and take them to be in heaven with him forever. However, no one knows when this will happen, so you must not make any prognostications 预言 about the time of his return...

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Jesus Christ is reigning for eternity in heaven. He will come again for you to take you to be with him. **Let this give you confidence** in how you live your life and serve him. **Don't live for the "here and now." Patiently wait for life after death-** in eternity in heaven. **Work hard and store up treasures that you will enjoy in the future.** Yes, you have to save up some earthly treasures for now...but don't overdo it. Don't hold too tightly to things of this world. **Start now to sing praises on the Sabbath to him who will take you to be with him for that eternal Sabbath.**

Finally, when Jesus returns, those who are not his children will also meet him – but they will meet him as their condemning judge. He will have a record of every sin they committed in thought, word, and deed. He will declare them guilty and send them to hell. If you don't want to be condemned to hell in his justice, ask him to take away your sin because he offers a pardon and peace to all who call on him in truth through Jesus Christ.